

EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE: REQUIRING INFORMATION LITERACY

by Nancy Wootton Colborn



INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on Indiana University [IU] South Bend's one-credit Introduction to Information Literacy course, offered in both face to face and online versions, and how it is required as part of the IU South Bend General Education curriculum. The evolution of the course is placed in historical context within the overall library instruction program at the Schurz Library.

OVERVIEW OF LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AT SCHURZ LIBRARY

IU South Bend, one of eight IU campuses, has an enrollment of approximately 6,000 students. The Schurz Library has 300,000 volumes and eleven librarians on staff. Librarians at IU South Bend have faculty status and have taught course-related instruction sessions as part of a successful library instruction program for over 25 years. Nine librarians do instruction; five of those nine librarians have primary instruction responsibilities and four have some secondary instruction responsibilities.

Library Instruction at IU South Bend has taken many forms over the years. The most common method is the traditional 'one-shot' bibliographic instruction session for individual courses. Over time, the instruction program has also managed to partner with a variety of campus departments in order to provide instruction to all students on campus in a more planned, curricular manner. These partnerships have included W131, the required writing course, S121, the required oral communications course, and U100, Threshold Seminar, a developmental course required of all students that enter college on probationary status. U100 introduces students to college-level reading interpretation, teaches study skills and creates learning communities by requiring that students participate in college activities.

HISTORICAL PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership with the Elementary Composition (W131) course faculty ensured that all students writing

a research paper received library instruction. At one point in time, these students were pre- and post-tested on their library skills as part of the partnership. The partnership with W131 ceased for various reasons and an arrangement was made with faculty in Communication Arts that library instruction would occur in all sections of S121, Public Speaking. This partnership included the development of an S121 course webpage (Schurz Library, 2005) to assist students in finding resources relevant to specific types of speeches required as part of their curriculum.

As part of the U100 course, librarians met twice with the students, and then students came into the library with their instructor for an additional two-three visits. U100 students worked in groups to complete a library pathfinder, on which they based a class presentation. Librarians designed the pathfinder and wrote research questions that were timely and for which the Schurz Library had sufficient materials to ensure that students could find relevant resources. The librarians also worked closely with U100 instructors on the assignments that followed the instruction sessions.

At the first U100 session, librarians taught students the importance of terminology in library research, including LC subject headings and call numbers. Students also found key terms in dictionaries and encyclopedias and did background research in *CQ Researcher*. At the second session, students learned to use library databases to find books, journal articles, and government publications. At follow-up sessions, when students met in the Reference area with their instructors, students used the skills they had learned to find additional materials and learned to ask their own questions of the reference librarian.

These partnerships, while invaluable in assuring that all IU South Bend students received at least some minimal bibliographic instruction, worked with a varying degree of success, and were problematic in that students could conceivably receive two-three very similar library instruction sessions in the same semester if they happened to be enrolled in more than one of these required courses at the same time.

HISTORY OF THE INTRODUCTION TO INFORMATION LITERACY COURSE

Librarians at the Franklin D. Schurz Library at Indiana University South Bend have offered a course on using the Library, in various incarnations, since the spring of 1996. The one-credit course was called *Library Resources and Skills*, and like most library courses of the time period, focused on specific library resources and searching skills. The instruction librarians developed the course content in 1995, and it was initially taught by the entire team of librarians, with a lead teacher taking half the modules and other librarians taking one module each, in an 8-week session that met twice weekly. The advent of the initial credit class was described in an earlier *Indiana Libraries* article (Russo, 1997). Over time, the course changed to being taught by a single librarian over an entire semester. Various librarians taught the course, based on their interest and preference.

In 2001, a team of librarians began development of an online version of the course, *Research and the Virtual Library*, which was also designed as a one-credit course. Because the course was intended for distance learners, the course focused on slightly different resources than the face to face course. The online course, which was first taught in the spring of 2003, taught the same research skills, search strategies and understanding of library resources, but concentrated on those resources that could be found online via the Schurz Library webpage and those found on the Internet rather than on print resources. One or two of these library classes were offered each semester at IU South Bend, and for the most part, they did not reach enrollment capacity. Students that took the classes self-selected as interested in information literacy, and were largely successful in the course because they valued the library and felt the need to learn more about the search process in order to improve their college experience.

GENERAL EDUCATION

Behind the scenes, in the early years of the new century, a faculty committee at IU South Bend was developing a new General Education curriculum. Thanks to Rosanne Cordell, who was then Coordinator of Library Instruction and served on the General Education Committee, Information Literacy was proposed and accepted as a part of the group of Fundamental Literacies that each student at IU South Bend must complete as a part of their General Education curriculum. The IU South Bend General Education Report and Recommendations (General Education Committee, 2003) included this section on Information Literacy, which was written by the instruction librarians at IU South Bend:

Information Literacy

Thanks to the explosive growth of electronic means of communication and data storage, an individual's access to information is now practically unlimited. It is imperative that today's university graduate develop skills in finding and evaluating information, both in print and in electronic form. We recommend as part of the general education curriculum a demonstration of competence in modern information gathering and evaluation, by successful completion of a course that meets the following criteria:

- provides the student with an understanding of the organization of knowledge and information, including terminology and types of resources available
- teaches students how to construct a research question and form a research strategy, including the selection of appropriate research tools
- provides the student with the theory, skills, and technique required to be an effective online database searcher
- applies knowledge gained about types of resources, search strategy and the organization of information to the critical evaluation and use of materials
- introduces students to issues regarding the ethical and legal use of information
- encourages students to develop research skills and habits that will contribute to their success as students and future professionals

The General Education curriculum came before the IU South Bend Academic Senate for a vote in the Spring of 2003. The curriculum was approved, with implementation to begin in the Fall of 2005.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

After the IU South Bend Academic Senate approved the General Education curriculum in 2003, the instruction librarians looked carefully at our overall course objectives and at our course descriptions for both the face-to-face course and the online course. After careful consideration, we decided to discontinue teaching the two courses, combining them into one course that focused less on specific resources and more on search strategy, research skills, and information theory. The new course, with a new course number, Q110, was titled, "Introduction to Information Literacy," and was approved in the summer of 2005. The course description reads:

"This course examines information structure and organization as well as teaching techniques and skills for effectively identifying, acquiring, evaluat-

ing, using and communicating information in various formats."

A brief course outline follows in the Appendix.

STAFFING THE COURSE

The reference librarians at IU South Bend are dedicated and energetic professionals, but adding a regular course load to their schedules was not something that could be done without making some changes. After careful consideration, the reference librarians decided that the reference desk could be single-staffed rather than double-staffed, thus reducing the workload of all teaching librarians to accommodate this added responsibility.

In addition, the required course partnerships such as those mentioned above with W131, S121 and U100 were something that the librarians had to give up in order to meet the demands of teaching the one-credit course. In exchange, the students were assured of less repetition in their receipt of library instruction, while acquiring a more thorough grounding in Information Literacy.

Librarians with primary reference responsibilities teach two classes per semester; those librarians with secondary reference responsibilities teach one course per semester. Q110 is offered through the School of Liberal Arts & Sciences in the course schedule. Any associate faculty that teach Q110 are compensated through Liberal Arts & Sciences.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Many of the librarians had taught in some capacity in the past, and many had taken a turn at teaching the library course before it became a requirement. However, there were still a few librarians, and some associate faculty, that had not taught the course. The Coordinator of Library Instruction assessed the training needs of the librarians using the Instructor Development Needs Analysis (Westinghouse Electric Company, 1998) and designed a series of workshops to refresh the librarians' teaching skills. The four workshops, held over the course of the summer of 2005, included training and development in these areas: Information Literacy as a discipline, classroom climate and management, active learning, multiple intelligences, assessment, learning outcomes, and campus administrative details. One of the sessions was led by the Director of the University Center for Excellence in Teaching, Jennifer Klein. The teaching librarians also spent significant time together examining the course objectives, including writing some objectives specific to each lesson, and examined pre- and post-test questions for revision. For those librarians who weren't familiar with Indiana University's course management system, the

Coordinator of Library Instruction planned training in the Oncourse® system.

BY THE NUMBERS

As the librarians planned the number of course sections that would be offered each semester, we estimated based on the number of new students enrolling each fall. This number suggested that if each Q110 course were capped at 24 students, we should offer a total of 22 course sections to meet the demand each semester. In reality, we have offered eleven courses each semester, at medium to full capacity. The reasons for this discrepancy were many: The new General Education curriculum was a 'soft launch,' with advisors being slow to advise students into the new General Education course offerings and failing to understand, despite marketing efforts, that Q110 was now a required class. Students, even if advised into courses, didn't necessarily enroll in them. The percentage of students at IU South Bend that enrolled in a full course load (12 or more credit hours) during 2005-06 was approximately 60% (University Reporting and Research, 2005, 2006). This is common for students at IU South Bend, and because of that, many students take longer than four years to complete their degrees, and courses that are required of freshmen are completed later in a student's coursework than is ideal. This slow start for Q110 turned out to be an advantage, giving the librarians a smaller number of classes with small class size during the first year of the requirement. This allowed the librarians to acclimate to the classroom and hone their pedagogical skills.

CLASSROOM SPACE

IU South Bend has a shortage of available classroom lab space, so the librarians agreed to use the library instruction room as the classroom for the one-credit course. Because the lab had only 22 student workstations, we had to negotiate with IU South Bend's



Current photo of Instruction Room, View 1.



Current photo of Instruction Room, view 2.

Information Technology department to add two more computers, and rearrange the lab to accommodate them. The lab is very small and this took some effort, but with the addition of a new instructor workstation and one additional table, we were successful in rearranging the lab to accommodate 24 students in a course section.

COLLABORATIONS ACROSS CAMPUS

As previously stated, the Librarians at IU South Bend have a history of working cooperatively with a variety of disciplines' required classes to ensure that library instruction reached the students at IU South Bend. While the form of collaboration changed, it did not stop with the beginning of the Q110 course. In the Fall of 2005, two librarians linked their Q110 courses with three sections of W131, the required writing course. This link configuration was necessary because of late scheduling, and was improved on in the Spring of 2006 with three sets of directly linked classes. While assessment on the Spring links is not yet complete, preliminary evidence suggests that many students did enjoy the benefits of linking two courses and of learning research skills in a contextual way.

For the Fall semester of 2006, the W131-Q110 link will be continued in three sections. Additionally, an honors section will be offered, which unofficially links with the Freshman Honors Seminar that includes a research project as part of the course requirement. We are also investigating a possible link with a second-level Writing course in the future.

ASSESSMENT

It is difficult to find any post-millennial account of library instruction issues that doesn't discuss assessment, and our story is no exception. A pre- and post-testing instrument was used in the libraries collaboration with W131 historically, and that instrument was

revised for the library course in 1999. Prior to the Fall of 2005, all previous pre- and post tests were analyzed and testing instrument was revised. We will continue to assess the course via pre- and post-testing, and will report those findings in future research.

From course evaluations and pre- and post-test results, individual librarians have made some changes in their courses already, closing the loop in the cycle of assessment.

CHANGES IN (STUDENT) ATTITUDES

As previously noted, students that took the "Library class" as an elective were self-motivated and usually did fairly well in the class. It was interesting to note the change in student attitudes once the course became "required." Many students were more difficult to engage, and the librarians found that getting past the initial obstacle of students not wanting to be there was difficult. However, these quotes from students (from course evaluations) show that many of the students do end up with the realization that the course will enable them to be more successful in college for having taken it.

"I will apply what I have learned to my future classes."
"I do think that this course will benefit me in future papers. I did learn a lot about collecting research and the "best" research."

CONCLUSION

While not every campus has the right planetary lineup to offer Information Literacy in a required one-credit course, there are a few where the timing, campus size and academic climate are such that this miracle occurs. At IU South Bend, we are at the beginning of this exciting journey. We will continue to assess student learning in our course and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the campus. While we now teach Information Literacy, we are careful to remind campus constituents that the course is titled, "**Introduction** to Information Literacy," and work to continue to offer upper-level instruction at a more specialized level throughout the curriculum. The entire General Education curriculum is designed so that the Fundamental Literacies, of which Information Literacy is one component, are introduced and then built on at higher levels throughout a student's college career. The Introduction to Information Literacy course isn't seen as a one-time inoculation, but as a stepping stone for IU South Bend students in their pursuit of a well-rounded college education.

REFERENCES

General Education Committee, Indiana University South Bend (2003, March). *General education*

report and recommendations. Retrieved June 11, 2006, from the Indiana University South Bend Website: http://www.iusb.edu/~gened/GenEd_RepRec.pdf

Russo, M. C. (1997). Team teaching a credit class. *Indiana Libraries*, 16, 49-53.

Schurz Library, Indiana University South Bend (2005). *S121 research tips*. Retrieved June 11, 2006, from <http://www.iusb.edu/~libg/instruction/S121.shtml>

University Reporting and Research, Indiana University (2005 and 2006). Indiana University *Enrollment*. Retrieved June 11, 2006 from <http://www.indiana.edu/~urr/enrollment/2005-06/>

[enrollment_full_report_4058.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~urr/enrollment/2005-06/enrollment_full_report_4058.pdf) and http://www.indiana.edu/~urr/enrollment/2005-06/enrollment_full_report_4062.pdf

Westinghouse Electric Company of CBS, Inc. (1998) *Instructor development needs analysis*. Retrieved June 11, 2006 from <http://www.e-lead.org/library/idna.pdf>

APPENDIX

Q110 Course Outline [Generic]

1. Course Introduction

Overview of syllabus, schedule
Pre-test
Selection of term topic

2. Beyond Dewey

Libraries, Types of materials in libraries
Classification systems in libraries
 Dewey Decimal System
 Library of Congress

The Structure of Information
 Timeline
 Primary v. secondary

Search Strategy
 Importance of terminology
 Narrowing and expanding topic

The concept of Tools

3. Background sources

Types of Reference materials and uses

4. Database Searching

The Structure of a Database
 Records
 Fields
 Search string
 Known Item Searching

Topic Searching
 Controlled vocabulary
 Keyword Searching

General keyword searching
 Stop words
 Boolean Searching
 And
 Or
 Not

5. Looking for Books

Online Catalogs

Using IUCAT to find books and other items

Types of Searches

Reading a Citation

 Call numbers, including Library of Congress

 Classification system

 Subject headings, lateral searching

Boolean Searching

Advanced Searching

6. Looking for Articles

Periodicals

Definition and benefits of use

Popular vs. Scholarly

Print vs. Electronic

Journal Databases

Locating in Schurz Library

Interlibrary Loan

7. Looking for the Best Articles

Advanced Periodical Searching

Subject headings

Thesaurus searching

Introduction to more databases

8. The Internet

What it is, how it works

History

Ownership and control

What is the WWW

What's available on the web; Fee vs. Free

Uniform resource locaters

How to find things: search engines vs. directories, Meta-search engines

How they work: spiders and robots

9. Internet Evaluation

The Best and the Worst of the Internet

Propaganda, Misinformation, Disinformation

Internet Evaluation Criteria

Critical Thinking

Edited Internet Directories

The Invisible Web

10. Government Publications

U.S. Federal Government structure
Govt. Pubs. in Libraries, including Superintendent of Documents classification system
Govt. Pubs. on the Web

11. Statistical Information

Using statistics
How statistics are gathered (census data, sampling, surveys)
Polls and how they work

12. In Style

Using & Citing Sources
Ethical use of information
Plagiarism
MLA Style
APA Style
Refworks software

13. Advanced Searching

Truncation
Limiting by Field

Nesting
Proximity Searching
Phrase Searching
Table of Contents Searching
Saved Searches, Search History, Alert Services

14. Course wrap-up

Term project due
Post-test
Course evaluation

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy Wootton Colborn (ncolborn@iusb.edu) is an Associate Librarian at IU South Bend, and coordinates Information Literacy initiatives at the Schurz Library. She enjoys teaching, and tries hard to ensure that students are learning.



Eight years of experience in teaching college Freshmen has convinced me that it is better to err by being too simple and elementary in explanation than to leave the student confused because we assume he has knowledge that he does not have.

... no amount of reading about methods and library aids can take the place of practical experience in using them.

Instruction in the use of the library has usually been given by librarians, with more or less cooperation from teachers, but the amount of this cooperation needs to be greatly increased...Instructors should, if possible, share with the librarian the teaching of some of the topics.

High school and college students can learn to work efficiently and quickly in libraries, using the ordinary tools of the scholar, when the teaching staff blends library instruction with the teaching of various subjects and requires work that involves intelligent use of library aids. There is room here for further constructive work by progressive teachers.

If instruction is given by librarians and teachers working together, they should plan the work carefully.

From ALA Bulletin, March 1934, Ethel M. Feagley, 'the teacher and the library': 'library instruction should not be a separate course taught by means of artificial situations but an integral part of every subject in the curriculum. To give pupils the knowledge and practice which will make them independent users of reference books and the library is an aim which cannot be accomplished by the librarian alone. The planning of the library instruction program, therefore, should be undertaken by the entire faculty. The librarian will be the leader and adviser in the project, but unless she enlists the help of every teacher she is powerless to accomplish the desired results. A committee composed of the librarian and heads of departments could meet and discuss the various directing study techniques which are needed by their pupils and which should be stressed in all classes.'

Brown, Zaidee. The Library Key; an aid in using books and libraries. New York: H. W. Wilson 1936, {Quotations from her preface}